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ALSACE-LORRAINE LOYALLY FRENCH DESPITE COST
All Classes Agree That Liberty Is Better Than Prosperity

Restored Provinces Suffering Under Widespread Business Depression and Severe Economic Handicaps After Three Years of Repossession, Yet People Never Waver

THE third anniversary of France's recovery of her lost provinces, Alsace and Lorraine, will occur next Friday, November 25. On that day, three years ago, the Tricolor was hoisted on the tower of Strasbourg's beautiful cathedral after fifty years of banishment.

There are few, if any, consequences of the war more interesting or more important than the effort France is making to assimilate Alsace and Lorraine after a half century of German domination. To learn the results of three years of this effort, THE NEW YORK HERALD recently sent the chief of its Paris Bureau to the two provinces to make a thorough study. His article follows:

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TODAY, three years after the German troops retired across the Rhine, Alsace-Lorraine is topsyturvy land.

Perhaps it would be better to call it a land only half turned around. How long it will take to turn the other half is hard to tell.

In their fifty years of administration the Germans had made Alsace-Lorraine face the fatherland, never patriotically, but economically and by force politically. They had Germanized the schools, Germanized all the system of law and pretty well Germanized all of the business practice.

The people who believed that Alsace-Lorraine after these fifty years could be turned completely around over night and made to face France had not counted upon all this. The fact that it is only half turned around after three years of desperate struggling with the problem by the French administration is to them the cause to-day of much disappointment and complaint. The real Alsations who want to be French are complaining bitterly that they are yet neither one thing nor the other. French politicians are complaining that this is because the people of Alsace-Lorraine do not seem to want to be either one thing or the other.

As one French official in Strasbourg expressed it to THE NEW YORK HERALD correspondent: "We tried to put on a ready-made French suit here and found that they had to have one made to order."

Half the Laws Are German
And Language Is a Jumble

That the country is only half turned around is evident the moment one crosses the Vosges. Fifty per cent. of the laws under which the people are living and trying to do business are still German laws. A man does business under the French, commercial law, but goes to jail under the German penal code. French teachers in the schools are trying to teach the three Rs in French to children whose language many of them do not speak. The universities are without their full complement of professors because there have not been found enough Frenchmen or enough intellectuals among the Alsace-Lorraine population to take the places of the German intellectuals, all of whom cleared out of the country after the armistice and have been forbidden to reenter it.

Out of this half turned around situation with its resultant confusion and complaint German propagandists inside and outside of Alsace-Lorraine are now trying to make all the capital they can. They are pointing to the present *malaise* as evidence that the German peace delegation was justified in asking a plebiscite before this region was restored to France. They are insisting that if self-determination were applied to this region to-day it would either vote to be German again or a neutral State under the League of Nations.

Nothing could be further from the fact. Neither at the time of the Peace Conference nor at any time since would the sentiment of this region justify such claims. Of course, a plebiscite would be out of the question, anyway. Nothing but superior force will ever take these provinces away from France again.

That Alsace-Lorraine was not a mistake of the Peace Conference so far as the wishes of a majority of its population were concerned one can find who goes there. THE HERALD correspondent convinced himself of this after a trip made from one end to the other of this interesting region. Resembling Pennsylvania, it is probably richer than any other corresponding area of France, with iron, coal, oil and potash under its soil, highly organized industries and well tilled, fertile farms. Agricul-

turally it can produce enough to feed its 1,700,000 people; industriously it can turn out three times more than they need.

Had there been a plebiscite immediately following the armistice, with the pure Germans disqualified from voting, it probably would have shown 98 per cent. in favor of French citizenship. Enthusiasm for France was then at its height. A return to French citizenship, to the democratic Government of France with its *laissez faire* policy with the citizen, as contrasted with the German regime from which they had just escaped, seemed like the dawn of the political millennium.

If a plebiscite were held to-day undoubtedly the French vote would be found somewhat diminished. No pot of gold has been found and the rainbow has faded before hard realities. THE NEW YORK HERALD correspondent, travelling from end to end of the two provinces, heard various estimates given by representatives of all classes as to what a plebiscite might show. In the region adjoining the Sarre the miners are out-and-out Germans for the most part, but taking Alsace and Lorraine altogether perhaps 75 or 80 per cent. of the population is solidly French and would vote for France even were conditions far worse. A small percentage might vote to try the experiment of a neutral State. Most of the malcontents would abstain from voting. The German vote to-day would be almost negligible.

This was not only the testimony of business men in Mulhouse, Strasbourg and Metz but it was the estimate of representatives of the workers themselves, of school teachers and those in touch with the trend of public sentiment. The head of the labor

Colmar, en fete for a French holiday, displays the Stars and Stripes as well as the Tricolor. The scene pictured is characteristic of all Alsace-Lorraine. In the lower picture are seen little Alsatian girls in provincial costumes marching past the Strasbourg Cathedral.



movement in Alsace-Lorraine, Herr Koesler, said:

"We are disappointed at many things. We see the cost of living here higher than anywhere else in France, and when our people protested with a general strike against a reduction in wages made in the face of this we saw the French Government use troops for the first time in our country against the strikers. Never once did the Germans send troops against the workmen of this country. But the French Government would have to do more than this to change our people. They are for France. It is tradition; nothing will ever change them."

The head of one of the largest industries in Strasbourg whose family has lived for generations in Alsace-Lorraine put it this way:

"We have lost virtually all of our business with the Germans and now have our back up against an economic rampart. We know that that rampart will always be there and we know that France cannot begin herself to consume what we produce. Therefore we must contract, at least for a long while. We are no longer part of the German economic empire and we are disadvantageously situated with respect to France. Orders have stopped from Germany and are not coming from France. There is no unemployment across the Rhine and there is here.

"French capital is not like the German. It does not go into industries, and we are a country of industries depending largely on outside capital. Production now is about 70 per cent. and getting worse, while the Germans have all the orders they can fill, and we would have been in the same position. But we would not change back. We would rather be French than German, cost what it may, and while perhaps 20 per cent. of our population is disappointed and

disaffected, enough perhaps to be against the French at present, scarcely any of them would tell you they actually preferred Germany."

In general here are the three main causes for what at the present time is the trouble in Alsace-Lorraine:

1. The fact that more than 300,000 pure Germans remain intermingled with the native population largely because of the clause of the peace treaty permitting those married to Alsatian women to take the citizenship of their wives. This is an irritating factor to the French administration and to all with decided pro-French sympathies.
2. The economic situation, worse here than elsewhere through the loss of the German market and the failure to secure orders from France, nine-tenths of the industries being reduced to a very low output, while living and production costs, due to the long haul required for French goods, have risen to a point where the general cost of living is to-day 16 per cent. higher than elsewhere in France.
3. The religious question involved in the maintenance or abolition of the old concordat between church and State, which Alsace-Lorraine had preserved under the German regime after it had been abolished in France, and which the Catholic clergy, wielding tremendous power among the people, desire to see continued, even though absolutely inconsistent with the French law of separation. Not only is this acting as a bar to the complete incorporation of these departments into the governmental system of France but it has made of the clergy a dissenting element to some extent in the matter

of the introduction of the French language in the schools.

It is estimated that before the war there were nearly 400,000 immigrant Germans in Alsace-Lorraine out of a total population of about 1,800,000. Perhaps 60 per cent. of these were Prussians. On the other hand, 87 per cent. of the total population spoke the German language as a mother tongue. The number of real Germans quadrupled in thirty-five years. It was just enough to balance the steady exodus of the Alsations caused by their treatment.

After the armistice many of the Germans left overnight. Others awaited the treaty, which for many turned out more favorable than they had supposed. The clause in the treaty permitting all German males who had married women of Alsace-Lorraine nationality to elect, between German and French citizenship is attributed to nine out of ten of the remonstrants directly to Mr. Wilson. The idea has been spread persistently that he actually drew it himself and forced it through over French remonstrances after it was pointed out that the Germans had expelled all of the French from the region after 1871.

Since the treaty came into effect upward of 200,000 Germans, a majority of Prussian nationality, have taken advantage of this clause and assumed the nationality of their wives and have all the rights of French citizens. The bulk of them are workmen. Some are small business men and some even large industrialists. There are 35,000 in Strasbourg. A Prussian General, one of the defenders of Metz, having married an Alsatian, elected to remain as a French citizen, but this was too much. After enduring the situation for a few months he decided to go back to Prussia.

Before the war the police mostly were

Germans. Many married women of the country and promptly took advantage of the treaty clause. A great many of them have been permitted to remain on the police force. The chief of the detectives in Strasbourg, a man named Schert, belonged to this class. Last month he was discovered to have been carrying French police and military secrets regularly across the Rhine. He escaped before he could be arrested. Investigation brought out the fact that Schert, though a German, had actually been employed to watch certain worthy burghers of Strasbourg, real Alsations, whose loyalty he had reported as being under suspicion. This scandal has reached Alsace-Lorraine from end to end. It is only one of many instances of the good nature of the present French administration emphasizing the *laissez faire* policy.

The French Government, to give it credit, has tried to apply leniency, as far as possible, to a people who had had draconian laws. Not only are there these 200,000 Germans who are already French citizens through their wives, but there are perhaps 100,000 more Germans scattered through the country to whom have been granted *permits de séjour* entitling them to remain. The bulk of them are laborers, workers in the mines in Lorraine. Not only have they been allowed to remain, but the French Government, unwilling to copy the severity of the Germans, who threw every Frenchman out of the country, has restored their property.

Many Business Houses
Have Changed Ownership

After November 11 37,000 of these Germans will apply for French naturalization under Article 3 of the Alsace-Lorraine chapter of the treaty giving this right to those who were in the country before war was declared.

The admission of this additional number of Germans is to-day the theme of many articles in the press. Once a German always a German, is the contention.

Up to January 1 there had been a total of 15,297 sequestrations, but the number of business concerns which have changed hands is not as large as might be supposed. The Germans who had come to Alsace and Lorraine were not the small merchant class; they were the professional class, the large industrialists, managers, functionaries and laborers. The businesses seized have belonged for the most part to the large industrial class. In Lorraine 60 per cent. of the business in point of capital invested is estimated to have changed hands. In Strasbourg, Colmar and Mulhouse it is probably less than 30 per cent., because here the larger industries belonged for the most part to Alsations save for the potash mines, where all but one company belonged to German capitalists.

The iron mines and mills in the Lorraine district, which were divided by the Government into eight groups, represent an investment of French capital alone amounting to nearly 600,000,000 francs. Unquestionably this was far below their

Ore Production One-third Less the Output of 1913; Wages Three Times the Amount Paid in Germany

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Commissioner-General for the restored French provinces, Alsace-Lorraine.



value and represented a tremendous bargain for French capital, as have all of the sequestrations.

The potash mines of Alsace will represent another 400,000,000 francs investment. These mines were capitalized by the Germans before the war at 30,000,000 marks. This, however, was when their production was restricted to 15 per cent. of the total German output. As their production now has reached a million tons a year as compared with the 300,000 tons allowed in 1913 and can be rapidly increased if necessary, it will be seen what a rich prize the French capitalist has offered to him. At present all these mines are being operated by the sequesterator.

The Alsations who have subscribed considerable part of the capital want the mines taken over from the Germans formed into a single company to cheapen production costs. A commission of the French Chamber has decided, however, to split them into companies. Behind this the Alsations see French politics. This has tied up for two years the disposition of one of the richest prizes of the war and has caused no end of complaint.

Not only has much business changed hands but naturally the higher places in the posts and railways. But here it should be said to the credit of the French that they have not imitated the Germans in excluding Alsations from the higher places. Take the post office, for example, in Alsace with 6,000 employees. Of these 1,200 were Germans who left with the armies. In their places are 130 French and the rest Alsations. Naturally the Alsations hoped for all the jobs and those who did not get promoted are raising the cry of French injustice, but the majority of the business men do not indorse this.

On the economic side Alsace-Lorraine is perhaps the best example on a large scale of the enormous dislocation produced by the peace treaty. Economically, for the moment, it is almost as bad as if one of the New England States suddenly found itself annexed to Canada with wages and production costs in the United States about one-third those across the line.

The great market for this great industrial region had been across the Rhine. Over the bridges at Strasbourg poured a never ending stream of goods both ways. To-day it is only a trickle, and this despite the fact that for five years the treaty provides that all of the products of these three new French departments should enter Germany duty free if the French Government so elected; as it has. The purpose of this clause has been largely and most unex-

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